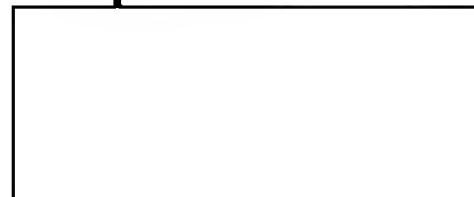


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with rightist critics. (Page 13)

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**LAOS:** PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA IS PUSH-  
ING FOR A SHOWDOWN WITH HIS RIGHTIST CRITICS OVER  
THE CONCLUSION OF A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WITH THE  
COMMUNISTS. SOUVANNA HAS SCHEDULED A JOINT MEETING  
OF THE CABINET AND SENIOR LAO ARMY OFFICERS FOR TODAY,  
ACCORDING TO THE US EMBASSY. HE WILL SEEK APPROVAL  
TO SIGN THE PROTOCOL IMPLEMENTING THE FEBRUARY PEACE  
AGREEMENT ON THE CONDITION THAT THE COMMUNISTS GRANT  
ONE FINAL CONCESSION--EQUAL STATUS FOR THE COMMUNIST  
AND RIGHTIST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS IN A NEW COALI-  
TION GOVERNMENT. IF THE CONSENSUS OF THE MEETING  
GOES AGAINST HIM, SOUVANNA HAS IMPLIED THAT HE WILL  
RESIGN. US EMBASSY OFFICIALS IN VIENTIANE HAVE BEEN  
CONTACTING KEY RIGHTISTS TO IMPRESS UPON THEM WASH-  
INGTON'S FIRM BACKING FOR SOUVANNA.

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